

frontier

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NORMALISING EMERGENCY

ONLY those who in an access of naivete believe that the continuation of the state of emergency after the December war was warranted by the realities of the situation in this country will wonder at the Government's decision to keep the emergency in force for an indefinite period. Even the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Mr K. C. Pant, has conceded that the conditions now do not justify the emergency. But in view of the internal situation in Pakistan, its attitude to this country and the arms it is receiving from China and other countries he thought it would be "psychologically" a very wrong time to lift the emergency. Mr Pant's statement means that in the opinion of the Government a proclamation of emergency may be necessary not only to meet threats of external aggression and internal subversion, as provided in the Constitution, but also in the event of a political disquiet of sorts in another country. What this silly argument underscores is that the Government is unable even to invent a credible plea for prolonging the emergency. After some time it will perhaps say that astrologically it will not be propitious to lift the emergency.

Mr Pant made a great show of the Government's liberalism by recalling that it was ready to lift the emergency from some areas but had to give up the idea because of the Opposition's insistence on complete withdrawal. He appealed to the CPI to have second thoughts on the proposal, as if the Government needs the support of the CPI to amend the Constitution to declare a regional emergency. Not that it will make much difference, for promulgation of regional emergency will be as arbitrary as that of national emergency. If Mr Pant's puerility in the Rajya Sabha is taken seriously, there should be no reason for continuing the emergency in States that do not border on Pakistan. Will the emergency be lifted from West Bengal or Assam, States farthest from Pakistan? They have virtually ceased to be border States, our relations with Bangladesh being what they are. But it will be pointless to continue the emergency if a State like West Bengal is excluded. Some other argument will be thought up in justification of continuing the emergency in West Bengal. Threats of internal subversion may prove a handy plea. The very knowledgeable

Union Home Secretary has already explained how the ascendancy of the Charu Mazumdar group over the Asim Chatterjee group among the Naxalites has become a law and order problem in this State.

After our national sovereignty and integrity have been guarded by the declaration of emergency wherever necessary, there may not be areas except for the high Himalayas and the deserts of Rajasthan where the emergency will not be in force. That will not deter the Government, though, from claiming that the emergency is in force only in certain regions. In the same manner the Union Home Secretary has claimed that most of those who were detained under the invalidated Section 17A of the Maintenance of Internal Security Act have been released; the Home Secretary said that the bulk of the 1700 detenus held under this Section in West Bengal had been set free. Even the State Government has not made this claim. On the contrary, the Chief Minister has gone on record that barring some exceptions the detenus under Section 17A will be re-arrested on specific charges. Photographs of detenus being released and arrested again at jail gates have been published in newspapers. In making spurious claims Mr Pant has, however, gone one better than his Secretary; he has said that MISA was more humane than normal laws and it was better to be detained under MISA than be in jail as an under-trial for long periods under various pretexts. He has unwittingly let out that under his Government there is not much difference between normal and abnormal times, between ordinary and extraordinary laws. Freedom from fear of arbitrary action is not among the freedoms in which this Government believes.

For Frontier contact

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Fair Elections ?

The Chief Election Commissioner's report on the fifth general elections in India in 1971-72 has just come out. It refuses to admit that the ruling party adopted unfair methods to win these, and praises the way elections are conducted in this country. The experience of many at the time of the last general elections was bitter. One should not allow oneself to be misled by the lavish praise he showers on the electoral system but rather consider the gaping loopholes in the electoral law to which he has to draw attention in the following paragraphs :

"In addition to the expenses incurred by candidates themselves, political parties, specially the national and State parties, spend sometimes huge amounts of the election of the candidates sponsored by them. But there is no provision in the law which requires the political parties to submit any return of expenses incurred by them on account of, or in the conduct and management of, any election.... In this predicament, the Election Commission in its report of the mid-term general elections in 1968-69 as well as in the draft bill which it sent to the government for consideration suggested a number of amendments. A good deal of them has been accepted by the Joint Committee of Parliament on amendment of election law. But some others which the Commission considers extremely valuable have not been accepted by the Joint Committee. For example, the Committee has not accepted the proposal of the Commission about the filing of return of election expenses by the political parties, but no ground has been adduced by the Committee for not accepting this highly valuable recommendation."

This is a very mildly worded comment on a subject which really calls for severe criticism and heavy political attack. Perhaps the mildness is the result of weariness induced by the experiences of previous years.

The Election Commissioner has been raising this point in all the reports since the third general elections held in 1962, but to no effect. Presumably, the Chief Election Commissioner has also in mind the fate of the Santhanam Committee recommendations made in 1964. After pointing out that a new tradition of integrity can be established only if the example is set by those who have the ultimate responsibility for the governance of India, namely the Central and State Governments, the Committee alleged that the public belief in the prevalence of corruption at high political levels has been strengthened by the manner in which funds were collected by political parties, especially at the time of elections. The Santhanam Committee recommended total banning of company donations to political parties and asked them to keep a proper account of their receipts and expenditure and publish annually an audited statement of such accounts. The recommendation about the ban on company donations was implemented, but it was nullified by ignoring the other recommendations. What the amendment to the Companies Act, unaccompanied by a bill requiring the political parties to publish their accounts or file return of election expenses incurred by them, has achieved is to increase the influence of money on elections by drawing a veil over the process. How else is one to explain the fact that the ruling party deploys enormous fleets of vehicles, distributes enormously more posters and flies an increasingly larger number of paid workers to catch voters? The Wanchoo Committee, in its recently published report, reveals that political parties in India receive large amounts of money from industrialists and big business houses. These donations, always given in black money, mainly go to the pockets of the ruling party. The industrialists will naturally try to please the party in power since they know that the government can reward them with licences, permits, etc.

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exchange and a thousand and one things which go into making a success of an enterprise. The dispensing of black money, it is natural, is safe only with the ruling party.

What the practice costs the nation in economic terms is no secret. By fostering the black money—indeed, legitimising the parallel black money economy—it undermines the foundations of the national economy. It promotes inflation and forces even honest businessmen to keep undisclosed funds to pay the ruling party. Secret deals are made for which the poor consumer and tax-payer have to pay. The story of the ruling party's deal with the sugar barons which sent the sugar prices skyrocketing was related on the floor of Parliament. An unconvincing rebuttal by the Government was made more unconvincing by the fact that no plausible steps to bring down the prices were taken. As the election funds thus raised are entirely black money, no accounts are kept. How they are spent, how much is retained by the Ministers who receive them or the party officials who have to handle them in passing them on to the Pradesh or District Committees or individual candidates always remain uninvestigable.

The Show Must Go On

The long-awaited bill on "black money" and tax avoidance has at last been presented to Parliament. Thanks to the Government's PR men, we have for long been made to believe that this piece of legislation will really mark the beginning of the socialist millennium in India's fiscal history. But the bill as it has finally emerged, hardly lives up to the expectations. It marks quite a lot but has barely much of a bite. It merely tinkers with the present framework without actually daring to suggest such fundamental changes that alone can tackle the problems of tax evasion and concealment of income. It is largely made up of

some random picks from the reports of the Wanchoo Committee and of the Law Commission. As a result, it lacks a cogent or a total approach. It has none of the comprehensiveness, let alone originality, of the integrated scheme that Nicholas Kaldor had suggested in the late 1950s. And the problem of black money, which in the words of Mr Chavan himself, now constitutes a "parallel economy", will be hardly touched by the half-hearted antidotes now suggested. All that will happen is that the crafty operators will only become a little more crafty, and the rules of the game a little subtle, but "black money" would not turn into "white". To all reckoning, this round in what has been prominently billed as the crusade against naked capitalism has also slipped out of the Government's hands.

One of the basic factors why undisclosed funds have kept on swelling out of all proportions is that the machinery which is supposed to tackle the problem has itself been corrupted by the charm of unaccounted funds that have kept on snowballing among some privileged sections of society. The new bill does not pretend to give any fresh lead in this all important matter. The tax officials have been given more powers to search and penalise the culprits. But if they were really that conscientious, then the problem of black money would not have possibly assumed such dimensions in the first place. Mr Chavan would of course say it is all a question of national morality. And that precisely is the point. It is time that the Government demonstrated its capacity and willingness to adopt some of the "hard options" of which so much has lately been said, and give more convincing evidence of its intention to change the structure. Instead, what it has done is only to make certain changes here and there. But the show will go on.

The Niesewand Story

Peter Niesewand is now free but he can enjoy freedom only in exile. He will not be allowed to visit his old mother in Rhodesia for two weeks a year if he writes anything about the military situation in the country or the charges brought against him. The reasons for the original detention were never given and the subsequent sentencing to two years of hard labour was on the flimsy ground that the intrepid journalist in some way violated the terms of the Official Secrets Act. There was no love lost between Niesewand and the Rhodesian authorities; the dispatches of this protean freelancer which appeared in a host of foreign newspapers laid bare the murky affairs of the Rhodesian administration and informed the world about the guerrilla activities in the country. But his reporting was definitely no source of information to the enemy of the Salisbury regime. Ian Smith is not afraid of the local Press which has been successfully intimidated into silence. Working under the threat of nationalisation, Rhodesian newspapers practise self-censorship which is no less thorough than official censorship. In the circumstances, journalists working for the foreign Press pose the only threat. It was thought that the victimisation of Niesewand would scare other foreign journalists posted in Salisbury.

Overtaking the conviction, the appellate division of the High Court has pronounced that Niesewand's coverage of guerilla activity near the Mozambique frontier last year had not damaged the State, but only embarrassed it. In fact the State could not prove that what was published was likely to be useful to the enemy. The Court decision was a great personal setback for the Minister of Law and Order who, along with the Secretary of Information, had plotted against Niesewand. The scheme had the blessing of Ian Smith who, however, declined to

accept the responsibility for the consequences. What the administration did not anticipate was that the detention would raise such a storm in the international Press; there was also unexpected fire from the generally timid local Press. Even many friends of the administration criticised the inept handling of the case from the beginning. For Niesewand the days in prison were a sort of self-discovery; he realised the advantages of being white. Many African leaders have been in detention much longer than Niesewand without attracting publicity either at home or abroad.

At present there are more than 120 political prisoners in six camps throughout the country. They are held under the emergency laws and the names of most of them are known in Rhodesia only to their families and to the authorities. A majority have been languishing in prison for about a decade without ever being brought to the court. Those who have been tried do not have a better story to tell; they have served prison sentences only to find on release that they face an indefinite detention under the Law and Order Acts. Niesewand is very much lucky for he was given the choice of leaving the country or prolonging his stay in jail despite the court verdict.

সন্নিবেশ

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Hunger Stalks Maharashtra— Anger Too

KALYAN CHAUDHURI

FOR months the Naik Government has tried to hide the real face of the famished State of Maharashtra. Now it has come into full view, with all its pain and terror. Three years of cloudless skies have left 20 million peasants destitute. The land is dead; the crop has been almost totally lost; this is perhaps the worst famine in the State's history. The urban rich seem quite unconcerned and unaware of the extent of the tragedy. They take a look at the newspaper headlines, dismiss them as usual items of bad news and go back to their normal occupation. Not far from Bombay the twenty million tragedies begin to unfold, but urban conscience still remains mute. No awareness; worse, little inclination to shake off the apathy.

Every day hundreds of hungry men, women and children from the famine-stricken areas are pouring into Bombay city in search of food and work. Cries of emaciated children rend the air of the posh localities around Malabar Hills or Pedder Road or along the sea-facing Marine Drive. Brothels have been swelled by starving village girls. In the red light area in Kamatipur alone, the number of new arrivals has doubled in three months and most of them, the police admit, are minors coming from the famine areas in a desperate bid to survive.

Leaving suburban railway stations under Greater Bombay, one comes across scores of hungry people—men, women and children huddled together in the open space in front. They lie under the scorching sun with the fear of the unknown writ large on their faces. Human skeletons roam about aimlessly, in batches, stretching their hands before passers-by and crying at every door-step. The local

people, however, are getting used to these sights.

Twenty-one out of the 26 districts in the State, which means at least 27,000 out of the 35,000 villages are suffering from 'severe scarcity'—the official euphemism for famine. According to the Famine Code, famine is declared in any area if the crop production is less than 25 per cent. Though the district authorities confirm that the production in most of the Maharashtra districts is far less than 25 per cent, the Government of Maharashtra, perhaps to hide its misdeeds and failures, has not yet declared famine in any part of the State. And so the sufferings continue.

The symptoms of famine are in full view everywhere outside Bombay city. During my tour in drought-blasted pockets of Central Maharashtra and villages under Bhil, Aurangabad, Poona, Ahmednagar, Sholapur and Nagpur, I have come across the same tragic spectacle of lean children crying for food, emaciated women queuing up for rice, parched throats asking for water, bone-dry cattle gasping in the heat wave and man and beast greedily sharing the rare trickles of water. Death marches relentlessly in these places. It is beckoned by starvation, water scarcity and disease, which go on in an endless, inexorable chain. Brave talk of socialism and "gandhatao" notwithstanding.

Drought which has brought severe famine in a wide area of Maharashtra is not a sudden phenomenon. There have been at least three major famines in the State since independence. This year the Maharashtra drought has reached a stage of extreme severity because it is the third in succession. If adequate measures had been taken during

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last two, and the lessons of the preceding years been fully taken to heart, the tragedy would definitely not have reached present proportions. In fact little has been done in the last 25 years. Only seven and a half per cent of the sown area in the State is irrigated. In the plan period, the Government has spent not Rs. 821.7 million on irrigation. But in the last two years alone the State has to spend more than Rs. 1000 million on famine relief. Knowing fully well that the rural Maharashtra is fully dependent on rain for irrigation and drinking water, the Government for the last 25 years did very little for the utilisation of underwater resources by installing deep or shallow tubewells.

With foodgrain stocks fast dwindling and ponds and wells drying up at an alarming speed, people in drought-hit villages become more and more restless. They are seen losing their faith in promises. A fact that strikes the moment one meets them is that they are angry. As a natural consequence, the State of Maharashtra has been rocked by a series of "food riots". Food and yarn shops, oil and flour mills have been looted by crowds of hungry and irate people including women with babes in arms. This is happening in Nagpur city, in the towns of Kamptee, Umred and Kalmeshwar in Nagpur district and in Sinnar in Nasik district. It has already led to the loss of five lives in police firing in Sinnar, as also in Malegaon, well-known powerloom centre, where thousands had squatted on the Bombay-Agra National Highway demanding yarn and food. How is it that by a pre-arranged signal, as it were, such widespread riots simultaneously convulsed towns and centres as far apart as Nagpur and Nasik? The vaunted "green revolution" and the boastful claims of V.P. Naik that "not a single man would die of hunger in the State" have been thrown into limbo. Only the other day, the local press reported a suicide due to starvation by an elderly woman in Amraoti district. The suicides of Khanesh and Nasik

are in dire straits. While the much-publicised relief works have been undertaken in the districts the Naik Government has done virtually nothing to ensure food supplies to the drought-affected people, even to buy with the pittance that they earn out of the relief works. Not merely in the rural areas, but even in the city of Nagpur foodgrains sold through government ration shops sharply dropped, till no more than one kilogram could be bought. Supplies were absolutely erratic. In the open market foodgrains literally disappeared, and only smuggled rice could be had by those who could afford it at anything from Rs 4 to 5 a kilogram.

Hoarding

Open charges of hoarding have been levelled against the Chief Minister, V. P. Naik, by some of the language newspapers published from Poona. These have so far not been contradicted. According to reports, Naik has given only 30 bags of grain out of a stock of 1,000 bags to the procurement agencies. A colleague of his, former Minister Abasaheb Parvekar, is reported to have given only 30 bags to the procurement agencies out of 400 bags in his possession. Not only is Naik guilty of himself holding back foodgrains, he has also failed to disgorge grain from the big landowners and wholesale traders. Barring a few villages there has been a bumper crop in the Vidarbha region, but procurement is not taking place at all.

Nagpur, Umred, Kamptee and Malegaon are centres of the handloom and powerloom industries. All these months, the price of yarn has been soaring to the skies and yarn becoming scarce in the market. With the announcement of yarn control by the Centre, even this meagre supply was spirited away by the yarn merchants. The quotas allotted by the Government were not even 25 per cent of the need, and the counts allotted were not what were needed.

Thus, the weavers found themselves in desperate straits. There was no

yarn, their looms were idle. There was no food, and hence, in common with others, they faced starvation. The crisis in one vastly aggravated the crisis in the other. That is why the people in certain places, and especially where there are large concentration of weavers, stormed into the food and yarn shops demanding that these be made available at cheap prices. The developments did not come about all of a sudden. The situation has gradually built up to a climax. It just cannot be attributed to a natural calamity that has overwhelmed the people all at once. The Naik Government has therefore no alibis to cover up its responsibility and guilt. The blood-soaked signposts of Malegaon, Nagpur, Kamptee, Umred and Sinnar indicate the extent of mismanagement of which the government is clearly guilty. One look at the long, impatient queues shuffling under the pitiless, sweltering sun on hot pavements in front of shelterless ration shops in Bombay would tell any man with eyes and understanding what government bungling means. The sad story of the maldistribution of the so-called extra wheat flamboyantly announced in newspapers, is writ large on the minds of the people. A meagre quantity of 2,400 bags of a white variety of wheat, just enough to give one kilogram for 20 per cent of the card-holders, was issued to a few cooperative societies. Naturally these were stormed by eager hordes of wheat-seekers. There were no special arrangements to meet the expected rush, no extra staff in distribution centres, no attempt to separate the regular, registered card-holders from the "one go" crowd. The absence of a normal rationing system, which means more than one trip every fortnight, is a constant source of irritation. The mismanagement of the distribution of the so-called extra wheat infuriated the people; more so when they found that the wheat was of poor quality. If administration is so poor in the capital it is bound to be worse in distant outposts. Besides, there is no doubt

that reports so far published present only an inadequate picture of the hardships with which the people have had to put up, and of the sense of desperation which drove them to looting and violence.

Anger is growing in the minds of peasants and people living in rural areas hard hit by drought and famine. Perhaps the one benefit of this Maharashtra famine will be to make fatalistic peasantry politically conscious.

The State Government was spending Rs 70 lakhs a day in April on relief. At first sight the sum may sound impressive, but break it down among 20 million and calculate how much each is getting. A spokesman of the Scarcity Relief Committee said that money was not flowing in as fast as they would wish. Moreover, the chief donors were not the rich, to whom a few lakhs would mean little, but labourers and mill workers, who were giving their day's wages. With no work in the field, there is no work in villages either. The cultivators, the agricultural labourers and the few craftsmen are all seeking employment on government relief projects. They have already sold out, or are selling out all kinds of their marketable possessions like silver ornaments, brass utensils, inherited or acquired in better days, for the purchase of food and fodder. Next to land, their other precious possession is livestock and they are disposing of that at an increasing rate. The story that a farmer sold a brass pitcher in Aurangabad for Rs 2 may sound strange but it is true. Didn't he work in one of the government relief projects? Yes, but he had not been paid for two weeks, and his family had gone without food for two days. According to the Collector of Ahmednagar district a pair of bullocks is being sold for Rs 50 to 60. The farmers are selling them since they know that they would die even. All over Maharashtra, cattle are dying in their thousands. Healthy cattle, which fetched Rs 600 some months back, are now priced at Rs 70. There is

some talk of importing fodder from outside the State, but till now the animals have been trying to reach the fodder and not the other way around. A visit to a weekly cattle market will reveal the entire story. The influx is so large that the many-acre market expands; is flooded with cattle in anticipation of buyers. The sales are few; the butcher-buyers are few and a feeble animal selling for as little as Rs 20-25. The situation is almost the same in districts like Sholapur, Poona, Osmanabad, Dhulia, Parbhani, Bhir and Aurangabad. Mr Naik stated in January that 150 camps had been established in the forest area of Vidarbha region, where an estimated 200,000 cattle would be accommodated. The entire project, it is said, has been abandoned since the Government could not meet the expenditure required for the transportation of cattle from long distances.

To the starving peasant government relief work employment is now their only surety against utter starvation. But the employment potentiality of these projects is extremely low. In all of Maharashtra, there is a total of 6,600 "scarcity" relief projects and 4000 "normal departmental" projects. The projects naturally fall into such main categories as soil conservation, minor irrigation works, excavation of canals for minor-medium and major irrigation projects, percolation tanks, road building and currently a great many stone-breaking projects. The Centre's decision to build the Konkan railway and three other railway projects, all with an eye on creating permanent assets and providing sustained employment, is still under final consideration. There is seemingly no lack of work-projects, but the stress on stone-breaking is proportionately much greater than on the more productive irrigation works. The most painful memory of our visit to Mardi in Sholapur is of the metal-breaking centres—the major source of relief employment to the famine-affected people. Metal breaking was once a form of punish-

ment for convicts under British rule. But this cruel and totally non-productive hard labour is still allowed to continue in India which claims to be a developing country trying to achieve socialism. There are school and college students among the workers at the metal-breaking centre at Satana. Women over 50 are also seen breaking stones under the scorching sun. The payment is irregular. The maximum a man can earn in a day is Rs 2.50 and a woman Rs 2. Wages are given on the output of work. One of the hazards of metal breaking is that it leads to night-blindness, which, in turn, can lead to total blindness, if not treated in time.

The number of job-seekers in relief projects has been growing. In November, 1972, the average daily attendance in relief projects was 1,700,000. It rose to about 2 million in one month. The official figure shows that it was about 4 million in April this year. Nearly 80 per cent of the adult population in Maharashtra villages are seeking employment. But the relief projects cannot provide jobs even to 10 per cent of the adult population in drought-affected places. At present, young people below 18 are not allowed to work in these projects, but there are persistent demands that there should be no such age restriction, and that minors in the 14-18 age groups be allowed to do work. As may be expected, in many of the projects created overnight, gross irregularities are being practised by the management staff. Corruption at the works plays its own part in further depleting the Government's insufficient resources. The supervisors are known to inflate figures of attendance and pocket the extra cash; some cheat the illiterate workers of their due. At places, the contractors ask the workers to meet all the expenses incurred in metal-breaking work. They have to furnish their own hammers, picks and crowbars and the rock-blasters have to buy their own gunpowder and safety fuses. Gunpowder costs Rs 5.30 per

kilogram, and safety fuses are available for six paise each.

There is a shortage of Government staff in relief projects, which leads to delays in payment of salaries to the workers. Such delay sets off a chain reaction. Unable to buy food—because of lack of ready cash—from Government ration shops, the people turn to private traders who are always trying to make a profit.

The situation became worse because of crop failure and is becoming worst with the total disappearance of foodgrains from the market. Poor monsoon is the main reason for the crop failure. In Sholapur district, rainfall between June and November last year was only 3 inches, as compared with the normal 20 inches. With variations, similar statistics can be cited for a number of other districts. Sowing operations were held up in large tracts of the State, and in some places where sowing had been done the seed was wasted. Even the better water-protected rice areas have not escaped all the ravages of the drought. The total normal grain output of the State is around seven million tonnes; this year's anticipated output is put at about half of that.

In every district, the demand for Government food has shot up sharply. In June 1972 Ahmednagar required 100 tons of food per month from government stocks. Today, Ahmednagar alone requires 16,000 tons. In Sholapur, the rural requirement is 12,000 tons per month; the supply could not be raised above 1,000 tons. The Government has promised a monthly quota of nine kilograms of food per head, but in practice the distribution is less than five kilograms. Evidence is there that almost any amount of food is available from the open market in cities and towns—if one is prepared to pay the price. It is just that the Government is unable to procure sufficient food to meet the emergency. Conditions at the fair-price shops come in for severe criticism. On pay-day, the relief workers are told that grains are not available.

When stocks arrive, they have no money. This has led to their taking credit from small traders, some of whom use the opportunity to charge exorbitant rates.

Water Famine

With fast-dwindling foodgrain stocks there is now an intense water famine in drought-affected places which come to about three-fourths of the total areas of the State. In Sholapur, all sources of water, including nearly 40,000 wells, forty reservoirs, all ponds, rivers and streams have gone dry. The water scarcity will develop into a first-rate crisis unless the Government's proposed scheme of distributing water rations is immediately introduced. On official estimate, even on a strictly rationed scale, the district would need about 4.5 lakh gallons of water every day. It is proposed to bring this water from far away places where water is still available by rail wagons. In the interior, where roads are bad for motor vans, handcarts are required for water distribution. In every village of Sholapur, Poona, Ahmednagar and Aurangabad, women are seen in long queues spending hours to get a bucket of water of doubtful purity; and they do not always get it. With the aid of tankers, water is transported across considerable distances primarily to the relief works, where it is rationed. Measures like transportation of water by tankers and bullock-carts, and revitalisation of some of the wells, have been initiated; but so far their impact has not been commensurate with the size of the problem.

On a rough estimate made by members of the Central Relief Committee of Maharashtra, it would require about Rs 400 crores to save the State. But, at the moment, there is not enough money available from either Government or private resources to do any more than smooth the wrinkles on the surface. Death is already stalking Maharashtra. According to a reliable source, more than one thousand people died of small-pox and 300 from starva-

tion. It is also disclosed that about one third of the total of the cattle population in the three districts of Sholapur, Poona and Ahmednagar may die since there is no fodder and water for them. The Centre's attitude to the whole thing is still shocking. It seems to have been more concerned in denying starvation deaths and scarcity than in taking steps to prevent the famine with its terror and pain. The Central Government so far has granted Rs 70 crores. It is nothing in the context of the magnitude of the crisis. The Government of India could have released the promised quantum of foodgrains and withdrawn the zonal barriers so that food and fodder could be imported from neighbouring States. It should have used on a big scale army tankers to distribute drinking water. After water, food and transportation, the problem is storage. The limited number of warehouses are all full with relief materials sent from different parts of the country. Packets of powdered milk, milo, wheat and medicine are lying in open lorries for want of godowns. The Central Government should undertake responsibility for this part of the relief programme by making army units build tarpaulin-shed godowns and sink new wells. The units should also repair or re-excavate the existing wells whether these belong to private individuals or not.

The Union Government is yet to step in the field seriously. Foodgrains, the total quantity of which is hardly enough to meet the demand for fifteen days, should be stocked for the coming months. There is no sign of rain. If it does not come this time also, the very core of the State economy would be affected for years.

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Naxalbari and after: An Appraisal—II

PRABHAT JANA

FROM about the middle of 1970 the annihilation of policemen, spies, bureaucrats, corrupt traders and petty millowners became the main form of struggle in urban areas. In the course of this struggle even traffic constables, educationists, judges, trade union leaders and leaders of different political parties were attacked and some of them annihilated. Instead of working underground in urban areas for a long time to co-ordinate the struggle of the workers and other working people with the struggle in the countryside, the Party's militants rushed into head-on collisions with the enemy's organised forces of violence. The Party cadres showed utter selflessness and great heroism. But the inevitable happened: while a large section of the people were antagonised, thousands of cadres were tortured, maimed and imprisoned and several hundreds, both leaders and cadres, died.

The Party militants were involved in another bloody struggle. The counter-revolutionary leadership of the CPI(M) incited their cadres and supporters—a section of the petty bourgeois youth—against the CPI(ML) and engineered clashes from March 1969. Afterwards, the clashes became more frequent, widespread and remorseless. The political struggle between the CPI(ML) and the CPI(M) degenerated into a tragic feud—a war of annihilation between the cadres and supporters of the two parties—a war that bewildered the people and served only the interests of the ruling classes. The role of the CPI(M) leaders was nefarious; they co-operated with the police and acted as police informers. For lack of political foresight, the CPI(ML) leadership unwillingly played into the hands of the CPI(M)'s counter-revolutionary leadership. The CPI(ML) failed to distinguish between the CPI(M) leadership and the large

section of its cadres and supporters, did not wage any persistent political struggle to win over the latter and did little to try to stop this mutual, senseless killing. This cost the blood of many CPI(ML) cadres and supporters as well as the blood of many CPI(M) workers and caused political confusion.

It is right to rebel against the education system in our country, which is semi-colonial and semi-feudal. Today, chaos reigns in the educational sphere because of the utter rottenness of the system. But as Mao Tse-tung said, it is always necessary first of all to create public opinion, to do work in the ideological sphere. But, when CPI(ML) cadres and lumpen elements systematically attacked schools and colleges with bombs, destroyed their offices, laboratories and libraries and set some of them on fire, the Party leadership supported all these anarchic, non-political acts instead of guiding this revolt along a political channel and doing some work in the ideological sphere. Thousands of teachers felt that they were the targets of this attack.

It was also right to rebel against the long dominance of the cultural and political influence of the leaders who represented comprador-cum-feudal class interests. The "herces" of the so-called Bengal Renaissance, able representatives in the realm of culture and education of the new comprador-cum-feudal class fathered by the British rulers, were children of the British colonialists spiritually and found salvation of the country in its imperialist fetters at a time when India was being rocked by anti-imperialist and anti-feudal peasant uprisings and the First War of Independence. The anti-imperialism of many "great national leaders", who flourished in this century, was indeed sham while their role as servitors of imperialism or fascism

was quite real. The new-democratic politics and culture of the working class, the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie, led by the working class, cannot win in the struggle against the pro-imperialist and feudal politics and culture that still dominate the life of the country without unmasking its real character. But the manner in which the revolt took place, the burning of portraits and the smashing of statues, bewildered and shocked the petty bourgeoisie which has been brought up to revere the pro-imperialist cultural and political leaders. Compared with the enormity of the task, very little was done in the ideological sphere. In this case, too, the Party failed to guide the revolt along the correct path and this failure was fully exploited by the enemy.

Thanks to the Party units, the activities of gangsters and hoodlums were curbed to a great extent in many areas and people enjoyed some sense of security. But some oppression was perpetrated on the people in the name of the Party in some areas. In a few areas the local Party committees, on their own initiative, took measures to stop it, but in most areas nothing was done to check it or to demarcate the Party from the elements that were utilizing its name for their own sordid ends.

Early in 1971, the slogan that those who would seek votes (for election to the West Bengal Legislative Assembly) and those who would cast their votes were to be annihilated, was raised in some areas. Even the political struggle for boycott of elections and against parliamentarism degenerated into a "battle of annihilation". This was another extreme and dangerous manifestation of "left" opportunism.

It was wrong on the part of the CPI(ML) leadership to characterize all other political parties as parties of the ruling classes. Different small parties represent the interests of the small and the middle bourgeoisie or the interests of other classes. To serve their own interests they may help the ruling classes and go against the interests of the people at certain

times, but there are also contradictions between them and the ruling classes. To see only one aspect, the aspect of their unity with the ruling classes, and to overlook the other aspect, their contradictions, is contrary to dialectics and, so, un-Marxist.

The All India Co-ordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries had expressed the hope in a resolution adopted in May 1968 that its contradictions with the groups that believed in armed agrarian revolution and professed loyalty to Mao Tse-tung Thought would remain non-antagonistic. But, later, these groups were unjustly abused as agents of imperialism and international revisionism on the ground that they were opposing annihilation of class enemies. This was a manifestation of extreme left-sectarianism. Indeed, an extreme left-sectarian line, that isolated and weakened the revolutionary forces, was pursued by the Party. Even the study of Marxist classics was discouraged and Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought was made to degenerate into a cult of 'bhakti', into a blind, unquestioning faith in the revolutionary authority of a leader, and similar anti-Marxist trash. All this was the work of the petty bourgeois with a long feudal tail.

Right Opportunism

The emergence of "left" opportunism during the last three years was perhaps historically inevitable. Isn't, as Lenin pointed out, anarchism infrequently a sort of punishment for the opportunist sins of the working class movement? In this country the Communist Party never became the party of the working class nor was its Marxist-Leninist ideological foundation ever firm. Both in ideology

and in composition it remained overwhelmingly petty bourgeois and trailed behind the pro-imperialist, compromising bourgeoisie. The CPI, as well as the CPI (M), led not even by a labour aristocracy but by a petty bourgeois-and-landlord or ex-landlord aristocracy, has, throughout its long life, pursued a policy not of class struggle but of class collaboration—a policy of treachery against the people. At particular places and in particular periods there have been revolts against right opportunism, for example, in Telengana in the forties. But right opportunism has dominated the communist movement in this country. Revolt against right opportunism started along the correct path in Naxalbari. But, afterwards, in the course of the bitter struggle against right opportunism, this revolt degenerated into "left" opportunism—a punishment for the many right opportunist sins—hypocrisy, servility and treachery of the communist movement in this country.

When we are criticizing deviations, it would be wrong to suppose that the entire work of the last five years was utterly fruitless and all wrong and had no positive aspect. Nothing can be more untrue. The work of the last five years has a positive aspect of immense significance. What is that aspect?

First, the Naxalbari peasant struggle, as we have said before, marked a turning point in India's history. In view of the long reign of right opportunism in this country, it was no easy task for the revolutionaries and peasants of Naxalbari to uphold the great truth that force is the midwife of the old society pregnant with a new one. No force on earth can wipe out the new revolutionary force that Naxalbari represents.

Second, the Naxalbari struggle could begin only by raising high the banner of Mao Tse-tung Thought and by waging a bitter fight against revisionism and right opportunism. For the past few years Communist Revolutionaries have carried on an uncompromising struggle against sham parliamentarism and other manifestations of revisionist ideology

and politics as well as against revisionist practices.

Third, it was the All India Co-ordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries that unmasked for the first time in India the character of Soviet revisionism. The CPI (ML) also exposed the real character of the "Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation".

Fourth, the CPI (ML) has waged struggle against bourgeois chauvinism and upheld proletarian internationalism. When all reactionary and revisionist parties tried their utmost to poison the minds of the people with hostility and hatred for socialist China, the CPI (ML) carried on almost single-handed a struggle against the anti-China campaign. It also exposed and denounced the Indian expansionists when they first intervened in and then openly invaded and dismembered Pakistan.

Fifth, the brief history of the CPI (ML) is the history of struggle, heroism and self-sacrifice. The cadres and leaders of the Party have never hesitated and do not hesitate to lay down their lives in the interest of the people. Here lies the basic difference between the leaders and cadres of the CPI (ML) and the revisionists. When the former are essentially self-sacrificing the latter are essentially self-seekers and careerists. The CPI (ML) has set examples—examples of courage to fight, self-sacrifice and devotion to the cause of revolution—at a time when sham militancy, rank opportunism, careerism and servility masqueraded as socialism, communism and Marxism in this country.

On The Eve of Storm

Today it is the eve of the storm. The masses of our people have sunk to the lowest depths of poverty and wretchedness, with drought, flood and famine as their constant companions. The concentration of land in the hands of a few, the predominantly semi-feudal relations of production in the countryside, the abject dependence on social-imperialism and imperialism, the industrial stagnation, the inflation and the soaring prices

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have driven not half (as official estimates admit) but more than three-fourths of the population—i.e., more than 400 million people of our country—well below the poverty-line. Contradictions between the people and their enemies—Soviet social-imperialism, imperialism, feudalism and comprador-bureaucratic capital—were never so acute as today. Contradictions within the enemy camp also—contradiction between Soviet social-imperialism and U.S. imperialism, contradictions between different sections of the bourgeoisie etc.—are also sharpening every day. The facade of unity that the ruling classes have raised under the leadership of Indira Gandhi will be shattered in the near future. It is the task of the Marxist-Leninists to turn the storm of the people's spontaneous struggles into a storm of revolution that will sweep away the filth that has accumulated in this country for ages. The international situation is more favourable than ever before. The forces of imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism are mortally sick and besieged ring upon ring by the peoples of the world.

Today the first and foremost task before the Marxist-Leninists of this country is to rebuild the Party on the basis of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought. To strengthen this foundation it is necessary to wage struggle against revisionism, which is the main danger, and also against "left" opportunism, subjectivism and one-sidedness. It is also necessary to conduct thorough investigations into the concrete conditions in the country as a whole as well as in different regions, to study the objective movement of different phenomena, and "to discover their concrete contradictions, the concrete position of each aspect of every contradiction and

the concrete inter-relations of the contradictions."

Emphasis should be laid on building Party units among workers and semi-proletarians in urban areas and among poor peasants and farm labourers in rural areas. The underground Party should use all forms of mass organization and mass movement and all kinds of cultural media "to arouse the people", link itself with and lead their class struggles step by step in conformity with their demands and needs and in accordance with the level of their political consciousness as preparatory to armed struggle and in co-ordination with armed struggle (when it has started). Various cultural media can play an important role in arousing the people and imbuing them with political consciousness and their role should not be negated as before. Legal struggle should be combined with illegal struggle.

The task of leading the struggle to change the history of this ancient land, i.e., the task of leading the Indian revolution to victory, falls on the shoulders of the Marxist-Leninists, who must be able to immerse themselves among the people. Good grasp of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought, ability to integrate it with practice, adherence to the mass line, a spirit of greater dedication and greater sacrifice will enable the Marxist-Leninists to make new suns and new moons shine in the sky. For the hearts of the people—their God—work together with them and the miracle will be accomplished.

To take up this challenging, stupendous, almost baffling task, revolutionaries, irrespective of the party or group they belong to, should unite within one common party on the basis of a programme and a tactical line. Or, if that is not possible at this stage, they should join hands to implement a minimum programme and conduct their polemics, if they want to, in a non-antagonistic manner. Today, no revolutionary can afford to feel self-righteous because all have made mistakes, some more serious and others less serious.

If a handful of individuals refuse,

ostrich-like, to see the reality and to learn from experience that has cost us the blood of hundreds of the finest comrades, and pursue the old course, they will only harm the cause of revolution a little longer. The attraction that terrorism exerted on a large section of the petty bourgeois youth and on a handful of peasants and workers has mostly faded away.

The voices of the long-suffering people of our country and the blood of thousands of martyrs demand that Marxist-Leninists dare to unite and struggle, dare to awaken and mobilize the vast strength and dare to win victory. The victory of the Indian revolution will surely bring near the day of the victory of the world proletarian revolution. The dream of ages—the ascent of man from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom—will come true.

(Concluded)

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A Dangeite Drama

N. K. SINGH

AN estimated 32,000 Naxalites are languishing in jail for years—most of them without trial. Unspeakable atrocities have been perpetrated upon them both in and outside the jails: murder, torture, rape, loot and what not. Such is the state of civil liberties in the 'biggest democracy of the world'.

Naturally enough, the first to raise their voices against this violation of civil rights were the victims themselves. On May 1, 1969, at a May Day rally held at Calcutta, the newly formed CPI(ML) demanded the release of political prisoners. Prior to this the party organ, *Liberation*, had published editorials demanding the release of 'all the political prisoners'. Later on, with a shift in the ML ideology, Charu Mazumdar gave a call for jail breakings. Prisons have become a centre of revolution and jail-breakings a common affair, he wrote in *Liberation*.

On the other hand, the question of detention had begun to haunt the democratically minded in the country, too. Individual as well as collective efforts were gaining momentum. The Association for the Protection of Democratic Rights and the Legal Aid Committee in West Bengal, the Committee for the Defence of Revolutionary Political Prisoners in UP, Civil Rights Committee in Andhra Pradesh and some Sarvodaya workers in Orissa had started functioning in this direction.

It was in this background that a Committee for the Defence and Release of Naxalite Prisoners was formed last year by the CPI through the courtesy of a Delhi advocate, R. K. Garg. A public meeting was convened in Delhi and conventions were held at Hyderabad, Calcutta and Patna.

The Committee held a national convention on April 20-21 in Delhi. It was attended by some 250 delegates from Delhi, Andhra Pradesh,

Uttar Pradesh—and West Bengal. There were representatives of the Congress, CPI, SP, SSP, Revolutionary Communists, Revolutionary Youth Front, progressive independents like Mr V. K. Krishna Menon, Dr Gyan Chand and Mr Ratan Das, a Sarvodaya leader of Orissa, besides a few Naxalites and their sympathisers.

The Andhra Naxalite leader, Mr Kolla Venkaiah, was also in the Convention for a few hours. But he had not come to participate in it, neither did he address the audience. "I am here at the request of a few friends", he told this correspondent. Venkaiah did not believe that this sort of thing would pressurise the Establishment to release the revolutionaries. Nor had he any misconception about the character of the show. "Our experience with the CPI in Andhra has been too bad". They were more interested in helping themselves than in helping the Naxalites. However, the demand for the release of Naxalite prisoners was certainly a good thing. If it is happening, let it happen. (For the readers of *Frontier* there is an extra piece of information: Venkaiah confirmed that the controversial letter signed by Kanu Sanyal, Tejeswara Rao, Souren Bose, Nagabhushanam Patnaik, Bhuvan Mohan Patnaik and himself, published in *Frontier* dated November 4, 1972, was genuine).

Venkaiah was not alone in his views. His apprehension was shared by many. In fact the entire Conference got divided in two groups: CPI and non-CPI. The non-CPI participants questioned the bona fides of the Dangeites.

The most severe attack came from the Socialist Party's George Fernandes. He asked the CPI to demonstrate its bona fides by releasing the detained Naxalites in Kerala, "where it is in a position to do so".

In a rejoinder, the embarrassed CPI leader, Mr Bhupesh Gupta, said that the Kerala Government was a coalition of many parties including the CPI.

But someone put the Dangeites in a really awkward position by saying

that the CPI may not be in a position to release the Naxalites, but the condition in Achutha Menon's prisons was certainly no better than in the other States. He also pointed out that though ever since the first meeting of the CDRNP held in January, the Dangeites have been talking about a 'mass movement' for the release of Naxalite prisoners, the CPI did not raise this demand during their Delhi march.

The Congress MP, Mr Krishna Kant, was the most angry man at the convention. His party was spared by nobody—not even the Sarkar Communists. He had the biggest grouse against George Fernandes who has pointed out the immorality of ruling party members demanding the release of Naxalites while their party was all out to crush them. In his speech the Young Turk leader attacked Mr Fernandes. He said that by criticising the ruling party Mr Fernandes wanted to purify his soul. But he should remember that in the beginning all the political parties were one with the Establishment on the question of dealing with the Naxalites.

All this criticism pressurised the organisers to pass a separate unofficial resolution asking the left parties in power to take steps for the release of Naxalites under their purview.

Another point of the criticism levelled by the non-CPI participants was the narrow aim of the CDRNP itself. Their point was that by giving it 'only a Naxalite' character the Dangeites wanted to embarrass the CPM—the CPM would not be able to participate in the movement. Hence the objective of the committee should be broadened to include all political prisoners so that the support of all democratic parties could be secured in this task.

Such was the animation on this subject that when the West Bengal representative, Mrs Jayasree Rana, moved a resolution on the release of "all the political prisoners in West Bengal" it was adopted unanimously by the convention. Some other members also demanded a modification in the

jective of the committee. In fact one of them moved a resolution to this effect. The organisers had apprehended criticism on this score and had already included a demand for the release of "all progressives and democrats languishing in prison irrespective of their party affiliation".

That one of the aims of the organisers was to win over wavering Naxalite elements became much too obvious in the speeches of the Dangeite leaders, who claimed that 176 extremist prisoners in Visakhapatnam jail had joined their party. Though the convention was called for the defence and release of Naxalites, the platform was used by almost all the leaders to criticise the Naxalite ideology. Among the political leaders a pleasant exception was Fernandes who said that the right to change the system "even by violence", as resorted to by the Naxalites, should be upheld. On the other hand, the Dangeites took it as a good time to give the extremists sermons on Marxism-Leninism. There was an Appeal to Naxalites inviting them to participate "in the national debate on socialism) and make it still more purposeful". "The progressives cannot afford to be divided and they must unite." The Appeal was adopted unanimously. "Let them satisfy their ego," someone said.

But the Dangeites had to face stiff opposition when they tried to bring a resolution asking the Naxalites to participate in the mainstream of the nation's struggle. "Aren't we already in the mainstream?", asked Ramnarain Upadhyay, a Naxalite leader of U.P. "We emphasise that we are very much in the mainstream and our path is the mainstream of the people." The passage had to be modified accordingly—after a two-hour debate.

The convention resolved to demand the release of Naxalite pri-

soners, withdrawal of cases against them, granting of the status of political prisoners to them, remission of the unexpired portions of the sentences imposed upon all convicted prisoners including those serving life imprisonment, a parliamentary commission to enquire into cases of atrocities on Naxalites is well as into the circumstances of the death of Charu Mazumdar, the scrapping of MISA, the ending of the proclamation of emergency, commutation of the death sentences on Nagabhushanam Patnaik and other Naxalites, lifting of the ban on *Liberation* and other proscribed magazines and papers, release of all people belonging to left parties and other progressives detained without trial, etc.

Having heard the reports from different States the convention declared: (1) hundreds of Naxalites have been killed in cold blood by the police, often on the pretext of 'encounters'; (2) the segregation of tribals and many villagers in so-called camps and hamlets by the police subjects them to humiliating suffering; the convention condemns the heinous crimes committed on women and men; (3) inhuman and degrading treatment has been meted out to thousands of Naxalites, held without trial in jails throughout the country; (4) they have been denied political status and their families subjected to awful humiliation; and (5) Naxalite undertrial prisoners are often denied the barest minimum of necessities; the condition especially of the innocent adivasis and Girijans is even worse.

But passing of resolutions, appeals and declarations is one thing and working for the same is another. Of the three States where the CDRNP was formed only one (Andhra) was represented at the convention. There was no one from Bihar while from West Bengal, ironically, there were only representatives from the APDR, which had decided to participate in the convention.

Perhaps the West Bengal Dangeites were too busy sorting out their differences with Siddhartha Sankar Ray to come Delhi.

Calcutta—The City Of Renaissance—VI

BENOY GHOSE

THE history of the gradual growth of Calcutta, from a cluster of scattered villages in the beginning of the eighteenth century ("The present town was then (in 1717) a village, appertaining to the district of Nuddea, the houses of which were scattered about in clusters of about ten or twelve each, and the inhabitants were chiefly husbandmen"—Walter Hamilton: *East Indian Gazetteer*, 1815), to a kind of medieval town by the end of it, and then to a modern city by the end of the nineteenth century, is immensely interesting, and has yet to be written. The materials for writing this history are plenty, but scattered. Many official papers have strangely disappeared, and many have been destroyed. Besides records and notes of travellers, the historian of the city of Calcutta will have to delve for his materials upon the domestic archives of the leading families of the city if available at all. Writing a history of this city is, therefore, a very hard task of sustained labour and perseverance. The scope of our present study, however, does not require any such history of the city. All that we need here is to bring in to focus some salient features of the process of growth of the city, by getting at the meaning of our renaissance.

One of the best ways of tracing the growth of the city is to compare some old maps of Calcutta. In one of the oldest maps, a "Map of Company's lands and lakes, by Captain Cameron", which bears no date, the village of 'Govindapore' is marked on the site of the present race-course, south-east of the new fort. In it, Tolly's Nullah is called 'Gonadosara Nullah', and a 'Company's garden' is shown on the site of Middleton Row. Only a single house is shown in Garden

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Reach. On the opposite side of the river, an avenue apparently led down to the Fort of Tanna on the site of the Botanical Gardens. Another old map, which has been much eaten away by age and bears the name of Claude Martin (the founder of Martinique at Calcutta and Lucknow), shows three houses in Chowringhee in the 1760's, and several homes in Garden Reach, one of which is designated 'the Nabob's'. Col. T. Call's map of 1786, shows only four houses, south of Park Street. "Of these four houses, one would appear to have occupied the site of Loretto House in Middleton Row, one was at the corner of Elysium Row in Theatre Road, and two lay near Park Street, between Middleton Row and Russell Street." In the north of the town, brick houses were sparse, and a good deal of jungle was still to be found within the precincts of the town.

The well-known map of A. Upjohn was based on accurate survey in the years 1792 and 1793. In this map, the whole town, with the exception of Chowringhee, is divided into small patches, and each of these patches in the 'black town' contains a few trees, a strip of jungle, and what appears to be a 'pukka house'. In the 'white town', on the other hand, the compounds appear free from jungle, and the houses are detached in separate enclosures. Between Dalhousie Square and Mission Row, there were only five houses in 1794. Perhaps land was becoming too valuable in this part of the town to allow of large compounds for residential houses. Consequently the wealthier Europeans had begun to move out of town, and new 'white suburbs' were growing at Sealdah and Entally. Both sides of the Circular Road were studded with European houses, and a sort of a 'West End' was rapidly coming into existence at Chowringhee. Between Jaun Bazar and Bural Ground Road (Park Street) some forty European houses were shown on the map, and about an equal number south of the road. In the Park Street-Chowringhee area

the streets were laid out with some regularity, which was miserably lacking in the 'black town'. Each part of the black town presented a network of lanes and bye-lanes, the irregularity of which could be guessed from the names of such lanes like Zigzag Lane, Crooked Lane, Serpentine Lane, Corkscrew Lane. With the growth of the town, the gap between the 'white' and the 'black' town was definitely widening.

In the first quarter of the nineteenth century Major Schlicht published a map (1825), entitled 'a plan of the city of Calcutta and its environs', for the use of the Lottery Committee. Calcutta now appeared thickly populated, the streets being mostly lined by contiguous rows of houses. Koomartooly ward was densely covered with pukka houses, and the Colootola and Bowbazar wards also showed a large proportion of dwellings. But the brick buildings, in the north of the town, grew fewer in number as one moved inland, very few such buildings being shown in the north of Jorabagan and Jorasanko, and the north-east corner of Colootola. In the southern quarter of the town, in the Park Street-Chowringhee area, there was a great increase of houses, although the south-east part of the area was still largely unoccupied. We leave the maps here and turn to a few other sources.

Imperialist Capital-City

Mackintosh wrote indignantly of the town of Calcutta in 1780: "It is a truth that from the western extremity of California to the eastern coast of Japan, there is not a spot where judgement, taste, decency and convenience are so grossly insulted as in that scattered and confused chaos of houses, huts, sheds, streets, tanks, alleys, windings, gutters, sinks and tanks which, jumbled into an undistinguished mass of filth and corruption, equally offensive to human sense and health, compose the capital of the English Company's Government in India." This physical appearance of the

town of Calcutta, 'a jumble of an distinguished mass of filth and corruption, perfectly mirrors the social life and culture of the times. It was the age of the 'founders' of the British Empire in India, the age of the English 'Nabobs' and their most faithful servants, the 'native neo-Nabobs'. About ten years later Grandpre visited the town and found the streets of Calcutta rattling with "all sorts of carriages, chariots, whisksies and phaetons, which occasion in the evening as great a bustle as in one of the principal towns in Europe". But Grandpre did not also fail to notice another type of scene on the streets of Calcutta: "From want, sickness or accident, many a poor wretch of the human species also expires in the streets... I have seen the body of a poor creature lying dead at my door serve two nights for food to some of the hungry animals (jackals)." Grandpre lodged opposite the Firetta Bazar, not very far from the 'Harmonic Tavern', the tavern where the top men and women of high society met in dance and dinner at that time.

At the dawn of the nineteenth century, in 1803, Valentia remarked: "The town of Calcutta is at present well worthy of being the seat of our Indian Government, both from its size and from the magnificent buildings which decorate the part of it inhabited by Europeans." About the 'white' and the 'black' town, he said: "Chowringhee is an entire village of Palaces and altogether forms the finest view I ever beheld in any city. The Black town, however, is as complete a contrast to this as can well be conceived. Its streets are narrow and dirty, but the houses of

For Frontier contact

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two stories, occasionally brick, but generally mud and thatched, perfectly resembling the cabins of the poorest class in Ireland."

In 1821, four assessors were engaged to revise the assessments for the house-rate of Calcutta. This opportunity was taken to obtain a census of the population of the town, which was accordingly done "from authentic statements furnished by the assessors" and the result was as follows:

Hindus	: 118,203
Mahomedans	: 48,162
Christians	: 13,138
Chinese	: 414
Total	: 179,917

The remarks upon the above figures which appeared in the *John Bull* of August 8, 1822, is worth quoting: "It has been ascertained that the extent of Calcutta from the Mahratta ditch at the northern extremity to the Circular Road at the southern circuit of Chowringhee is not more than $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles, and that its average breadth is only one mile and a half. The lower or southern division of the town, which comprised Chowringhee, is but thinly peopled; the houses of Europeans widely scattered, and Colinga, which is a part of it, is chiefly occupied by natives. The division between Dhurramtolla and Bow Bazar has a denser population; it comprises the most thickly inhabited European part of Calcutta, as well as a great number of country-born Christians, who reside in the town with their families. The north division, between the Bow Bazar and Muchooa Bazar, comprises perhaps the most dense part of the population of Calcutta. The upper division to the north of Muchooa Bazar is, comparatively speaking, but thinly covered with habitations, presenting towards the north and east extensive gardens, large tanks, and ruinous habitations. It is not improbable, therefore, that the large estimates made of the population of Calcutta at former periods, may be owing to the crowds of artisans,

labourers, servants and sircars, and to the numerous strangers of every country which constantly meet the eye in every part of the town. Indeed, the number entering the town daily from the suburbs and opposite side of the river are estimated by Magistrates at 100,000. This was done by stationing sircars and peons at all the principal outlets of the town. The peons counted the passengers by flinging to the sircars a cowrie for every hundred passengers, noting separately the carriages and hackeries; and the average of different returns gave an influx of about 100,000 individuals, besides carriages and horses. Upon the whole, then, it appears to be the opinion of the Magistrates of Calcutta, from all the returns laid before them, that, by taking the resident population at about 200,000, and the numbers entering the town daily at 100,000, we shall have a statement of population not much wide of the truth". It may be noted, in this context, that in their first report, dated 1840, the Fever Hospital Committee adopted the idea of "a fixed population, estimated at under 200,000, or a floating population of 300,000".

The city of Calcutta was like this in the age of Rammohan. It started growing from a merchants' town into an imperialist's capital city, when Wellesley was the Governor-General. "Few Governors-General", writes Beverley in his Census Report of 1876, "have done as much for Calcutta as Lord Wellesley effected during his tenure of office from 1798 to 1805". Why was Wellesley so much interested in the improvement of the town? Because, as a ruler, "Wellesley's successes were dazzling. In six years he had changed the face of India. In 1798 the British were clinging precariously to their three settlements of Bengal, Bombay and Madras, separated by many hundreds of miles of hostile country and threatened by the Marathas, Hyder Ali and the French. By the end of 1803 they were the paramount power over the whole of

India upto the river Sutlej, and the Indian Princes had been reduced to the position of subordinate vassals. French dreams of the domination in the East had been shattered..." (Rawlinson). Wellesley, therefore, could write: "Duty, honour and policy require that India should not be administered as a temporary and precarious acquisition", but "must be considered as a sacred trust and a permanent possession".

In his famous minute, recorded on the 16th June 1803, Wellesley declared: "The increasing extent and population of Calcutta, the capital of the British Empire in India and the seat of the Supreme Authority, require serious attention". And serious attention was, indeed, given, but in Wellesley's own residence in the city first. It was he who "determined upon building a palace suitable to his magnificent ideas, and such one as would be proper for the residence of the British Governor-General of India. This he immediately caused to be commenced partly upon the site of the old Government house, but taking in the Council House and about sixteen other handsome private mansions, many of them not having been erected above five years, the whole of which were pulled down, the ground upon which they had stood being cleared away to create superb open square area, in the middle of which his meditated palace was to stand" (W. Hickey). A sixty feet wide road was carried completely round the town of Calcutta, except towards the river Hooghly, to an extent of about eight miles (Circular Road). He had another scheme in contemplation, that of embanking the river on the Calcutta side, from the foot of the Glacis of Fort William to the northern end of the town, by forming a solid wharf of masonry, at particular spots of which he wanted to have suitable warehouses, the Custom House and other public offices. Plans of this work were drawn and delivered to him. "Not content with having works of such magnitude and unbounded extent

in fact, he at the same time commenced a second palace at Barrackpore, almost rivalling in magnificence the Calcutta one, which he intended as country-residence of future Governors-General as he could not expect it would be completed within his own reign. The grounds... he laid out with extraordinary taste and elegance, upon different parts of which he erected a theatre, a riding-house, with probably the finest aviary and menagerie in the world... (Hickey).

Calcutta, "the Capital of the British Empire in India", which was to be considered as a 'sacred trust' and 'permanent possession', set forward with town-improvement schemes, under the Commissioners, with seven-year lotteries between 1809 and 1817. In 1817, the famous Lottery Committee was appointed to carry out systematically the improvement schemes, and it continued to work till about 1836. Three large unpublished manuscript volumes, containing the proceedings of the Committee from 1817 to 1821 (the rest, up to 1836, are still untraced), are packed with most interesting information about the process through which Calcutta was being shaped, according to the desire of the imperialist rulers, into a colonial bureaucratic city, with its 'Law', 'Order' and 'Uniformity'. 'Law' was there for confirming the status and power of the privileged classes; 'order' was based upon absolute subjection to the rulers; and 'Uniformity' was the geometrical Uniformity of bureaucracy.

[To be continued. Part V appeared on May 5].

For Frontier contact

C. P. CHOWDHURY,

The English Book Shop,

M. Sector 22,

Chandigarh,

MAY 19, 1973

Book Review

SHAPES AND FORMS

By Arup K. Datta

Transition Books, 162/190

Lake Gardens, Calcutta 45.

Price Rs. 32.00.

IN India rarely does an artist—even after death—get a book published about his work. The Lalit Kala Akademi occasionally brings out one to introduce the work of a contemporary artist, but how it selects him remains a mystery. So any new book, aiming at introducing an individual or a group of artists, from any part of the country, should be wholeheartedly welcomed.

Educated Indians are callous about their artistic heritage. The education system being what it is, does not even help one in appreciating contemporary art. The artist is forced to depend on the new rich class and foreign tourists for bread and butter. In Delhi he kowtows with the embassy staffs and the political/big-wigs to sell paintings. In other major cities he lives by his wits. It was this that had prompted Rabin Mondal to publish *Drawings by Fourteen Contemporary Artists of Bengal* in 1970. Arup Datta's *Shapes and Forms*, beautifully printed in an expensive format, with a lot of drawings, is a continuation in the same line. The five artists selected for the book are Sunil Madhav Sen, Nirode Mazumdar, Prakash Karmakar, Dhiraj Choudhury and Sunil Das.

The trouble with any anthology is that it can never satisfy everyone. Moreover, the reader often has to adjust with the taste of the editor, which sometimes is not an easy task. I do not think the inclusion of one or two of the selected artists can be justified on any score. The choice seems to have been more personal than objective, for the selection does not appear to have any basis or chronology. To avoid controversy Datta could have included Nikhil Biswas (1930-1966), especially because Biswas's medium was mainly drawing and not so much painting.

There should have been no hesitation in including him.

In spite of the lapses one should be grateful to Arup Datta for having the courage to publish such a book. The life and work of each artist has been discussed in some detail. On the whole the text is informative, if at times rather dull. What it lacks is depth. It seems Datta's main failing is that he is a journalist. It is obvious that he has barely understood creativity in its various aspects. Most of the time his English is weak and occasionally it verges on journalese. In such a major work, I think, it would be better if he had collaborated or at least had it edited before handing it over to the press.

It is hard to understand why Datta did not utilise the scope to discuss the social context which produced the artists. Perhaps it is wrong to ask him to be another John Berger. The book has a lot of drawings and yet it is amazing that there is hardly any discussion on the subject. The characteristics of the drawings of each artist have not been mentioned. It seems that Datta wants to talk about certain artists and their work and for this he uses drawings as illustrations without caring to assess the value of this particular medium. In fact drawings mirror the artist's mind. It is an attempt to search for a contour that has a rhythm of its own. It is an attempt to realize the essence of a thing or person in a world which is continually changing. Nirode Mazumdar's convincing, bold and definite statements, Sunil Das's quivering yet intense search for real dynamic form and Pradesh Karmakar's sure lines tracing out the shapes of a disintegrating and an uneven world are totally different, done by people who perceive the world differently.

In spite of the severity of the criticism, readers are asked to collect a copy of the book, for one should not belittle a pioneering effort. The book has many good points too. The reproductions are excellent and the information about established artists and their works are on the whole accurate. From the conception

through to execution of the project Datta has shown that he has vision and zeal. If he had been less daring and ambitious he could have possibly written a better book.

Sandip Sarkar

A Model Adaptation

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

SURGING waves rush on the lens, as the camera holds on the reflection of Elsinore Castle. The chimes of the midnight hour are on the soundtrack. The credits appear on the rough surface of the stone wall lighted by ghostly torch flames. Shostakovich's score swells to a wailing crescendo and at once the gothic mood is set in Kozinitsev's *Hamlet*.

Anyone trying to adapt Shakespeare for the screen faces the eternal dilemma, whether to remain totally faithful to the bard, or to treat him merely as source-material and to mould him according to the aesthetic and philosophic attitudes of the adaptor as Shakespeare himself did when he wrote his plays drawing on the existing chronicles. Kozinitsev attempts to strike a middle path between the two extremes and he is eminently successful in his job. He has followed the basic structure of the text quite closely, keeping almost all the incidents and characters intact but nowhere has he allowed his fidelity to the original to impede the visual flow. Instead, he has been remarkably inventive in applying suitable visual equivalents to the lines (as in the soliloquy sequences and in the ghost-scene) without being over-literary in his use of

images, and this has intensified the impact of the scenes.

Kozinitsev's *Hamlet* is a less brooding, less introspective character than the other *Hamlets* we have seen. He is not the isolated intellectual type. He is a man of the people, a full man poised for action, but deterred by circumstances. It is in this context that his prangs, anger, love and final revenge achieve an epic height. Smoktunovsky's sensitive face registers every twitch of emotion almost as eloquently as is done by Shakespeare's words. Indeed, with its marvellous blending of techniques and content, Kozinitsev's film should serve as a model for transposing Shakespeare on celluloid.

Letters

The Lumpen Problem

R. P. Mullick's article "The Lumpen Problem" (April 28, 1973) does not lead us anywhere either in getting into the problem itself, or, as a criticism of S. Ghosh's earlier article (March 17, 1973) on the same topic.

What is essentially missing is the basic starting point for any problem of Marxism-Leninism, i.e., the class question. The fact that the lumpens are actually a section of the working class and peasantry who cannot get work or who have lost their lands and not "a class by themselves", has been ignored. Instead, some pseudo-psychoanalytical explanations are put forward—like living in unhygienic one-room tenements in bustees or of being the product of unrecognised marital relations and consequently becoming devoid of respect for life.

If we are to be specific about West Bengal, the working class here has been mainly drawn from two sections of people. The larger contingent hails from the rural areas of Bihar and Orissa and is mostly engaged as unskilled labourers in the

jute, engineering and manufacturing industries. The other main category is drawn from the post-partition refugees from East Bengal, mostly engaged as skilled workers in the leading industries owing to their better access to literacy and training. The second contingent has a predominantly petty-bourgeois origin and has a natural aspiration for white collar jobs in the industries. In general, they are workers in the factories, but petty-bourgeois in their social environment. Therefore, it is the former group which forms the core of the working class here, with the definite characteristics of the class. Although they were actually "imported" they have formed definite roots in the local tradition and at the same time have been successful in preserving their own traditions. The collective singing bouts of the Biharis in the evenings and similar community gatherings of the Orissians and at the same time their enthusiastic participation in the local festivals, attest to this truth. As for these "imported" people do not do much to increase the lumpen problem here. On the other hand, employment among the East Bengal refugees is most intense. As a direct consequence, lumpency among this section of the urban population is most rampant. Unfortunately Mr Mullick, this section has started its "life as a fringe element of the established society". Not were these people born in the terrible conditions of poverty, illness and ignominy. Instead, they had the miserable fate of being born in a comparatively decent environment and then being dragged into the sudden reality of homelessness, unemployment, hunger and death—the advocates of partition.

The unstable character of the lumpens is a direct product of the unstable economic condition. The specific characteristics of this condition, as cited by Mr Mullick, are not the cause of their lumpency, rather the effect of that unstable economic condition.

That the normal errands of

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lumpens became almost impossible to carry out during the height of the CPI (ML) movement, is evident from the fact that in localities where the party had its strongholds, cases of theft, petty snatching, gambling, eye-teasing etc. reached their all-time low. As for the indiscriminate "actions" perpetrated by the lumpens in that period, it was not they who should be blamed alone. Rather, these came well within the scope of the then policy of the party. The genuine political cadres did not receive much guidance on the lumpen problem from the party leadership and consequently there was no definite line vis-a-vis handling of the lumpens. In this respect S. Ghosh's article should be considered as an eye-opener and similar positive articles from the revolutionary ranks on this topic should follow, so that we become more enlightened.

Mr. Mullick's last paragraph is a real jigsaw puzzle. Starting with an ex-parte decree prohibiting allotment of mass-work to the lumpens, he abruptly ends up with the philosophical resignation of reluctantly including the lumpens in his team of "historic" revolutionaries. In suggesting allotment of mass-work in alien localities to the lumpens who have "come forward, enthused by the party ideal", so that they could serve the people without being looked down upon by them, "and likewise reform themselves", S. Ghosh has merely stated Mao Tse-tung's wishings, as cited by himself, which, one expects, is no offence. He has, however, devoted his concluding paragraphs in uttering caution concerning correct handling of this

problem. The total banishment of the lumpens from the revolutionary ranks by Engels in the nascent stage of Marxism must today give way to cautious and correct handling of them by the party in the era of developed Marxism, in the era of Mao Tse-tung Thought.

S. RAY
Calcutta

A Swedish Man-Eater

Ask the Manipuri authorities who Göran Frankel is. If they pretend not to know it, here is the true picture. Göran Frankel is the Socialist Superman, the Revolutionary Man-eater. Wow! He has the appetite of a Gargantua. He usually eats 10-15 capitalists for lunch and swallows it down with the juice of one hundred crushed bourgeois compradors together with a salad made of some fat, corrupt bureaucrats, very nourishing. As a matter of fact the Manipuri authorities have made him jump for joy in front of his own mirror. (The mirror of course being made of the liquid eyeballs of feudal landlords.) Thanks to the Manipuri authorities, I have indeed regained my self-respect.

On September 23 last year a friend of mine, Mr Indukant Shukla, Associate Professor in English at J. N. University in Imphal, Manipur, was arrested for "sedition". The reason was an article of his published in the New Delhi weekly *Point of View* of September 9, dealing with Manipuri politics. He was released on bail on November 5. A few periodicals also informed the public about the case. Mr Shukla happens to be a well-known translator and essayist. Among other things he has translated Negro poetry into Hindi verse and also Tolstoy's "What is Art?". Personally I know Mr Shukla as a very fine man, a progressive and radical humanist. The news of his arrest came as a shock to me.

According to Mr Shukla, his spine was damaged because of police torture. On October 9 he was beaten up in a jail van. Another attempt was made on his life on January 16 this year.

Being indirectly involved in this I consider it my duty to speak up. First (having received the news, I wiped the cold perspiration off my forehead and did some serious re-thinking).

In 1969 I was studying in India. Once I made a trip to Rajasthan. On my way from Udaipur to Delhi the train came to a halt at a small railway junction. We all started to roam the platform. A stranger came up to me.

—Hello, he said. You stayed at room so-and-so in this-and-that hotel in Udaipur. Well, I stayed in the room next to yours, but you did not notice me... (malicious smile) and before that you....

Whereupon he started to account for a lot of things I had been doing at different places. I asked him how he could know all this.

—Well, it is my job to know it.

He smiled proudly and walked off, careful not to destroy the dramatic effect. So this was the James Bond of India! I had to laugh.

Later on when I used to meet leftist friends in Calcutta they would not talk to me unless they had searched the whole room including the paper baskets. I was amused at this. Paranoia—they overdid it.

I do not laugh any longer.

What is meant by "sedition"? Is Mr Shukla not allowed to give voice to his own free opinion? I thought freedom of speech was guaranteed by the Indian Constitution in accordance with the UN Charter of Human Rights.

The Manipur police must have thought the same, because during Mr Shukla's arrest his house was searched. Some private letters from me were used as "evidence". Police papers now state that Mr Shukla is "leader of anti-socials, Naxalite, confederates within and without Mani-

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People's Book House

Cowasji Patel Street.

Melher House,

Tert, Bombay

MAY 10, 1973

pur". Obviously I am the "confederate without". Who is the "confederate within"? It seems like voicing your opinion is enough to make you a Naxalite and receiving letters from abroad is enough to make you a "leader of anti-socials".

What do my letters prove? Nothing. I ask questions about the Naxalite movement; any curious outsider would do that to any Indian intellectual. Now, let us hope this paper will not get raided for publishing letters from a dangerous Swedish Naxalite—whatever that is.

As long as Mr Shukla was just one of the critics of the ruling class in India, he had many friends. Now he is contagious as the Plague. The Marxists say he is supported by the CIA, the teachers say he is not a teacher but a journalist and the

journalists ask to which paper he is accredited.

Which are the roots of this fear? Well, Mr Shukla is just a single individual—very little to waste words on in a nation of 550 million. But what about all the other cases of detention on flimsy grounds or no grounds at all? Or am I just getting that fit of leftist Indian paranoia?

GORAN FRANKEL
Sweden

The Judiciary

The appointment of a Chief Justice by superseding three senior Supreme Court judges by the Government of India has created an unprecedented uproar in the newspapers followed by strikes in many

judicial courts throughout the country. All cry themselves hoarse that democracy in India is in danger. But one wonders why all those who have raised a strong protest against the supersession did not utter a word for the immediate implementation of the Supreme Court judgment declaring a section of MISA void. Was not that non-implementation a greater insult to the Supreme Court? Thousands are still languishing in jails.

Lenin said, "The independence of the judiciary in a bourgeois state is a farce". So long as the judiciary serves the purpose of that State, it is independent, otherwise it is constituted from time to time according to the needs of the ruling class.

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Defend Prisoners

The Legal Aid Committee has been organised to defend all those who are being victimised for holding political beliefs dissimilar to those of the party in power. Our object is to defend such cases irrespective of the political ideology of the victims.

There are over ten thousand detenus and undertrial prisoners in West Bengal only. Innumerable cases have been pending since 1968-69. Despite reminders the police are reluctant to submit chargesheets and bail is being opposed stubbornly. If one is granted bail he is tagged to some other cases. Thus the prisoners are virtually denied any defence. The overwhelming majority of those who had to be released after the Supreme Court struck down Section 17A of the MISA, were immediately re-arrested.

There is great need to expand our work and the task before us is huge. We can hope to tackle it adequately only if greater co-operation is forth-

coming from all democratically-minded people not only in this State but in the whole of India.

We appeal to all democratic people :

To contribute generously to this Committee ;

To communicate to us all cases of political victimization in need of legal aid.

Cheques drawn in favour of Bina Banerjee may be sent to either of the addresses given below; money orders, cash and communications to the office (2).

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Account No. 10816
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Calcutta-1.
Visiting hours: 4-30 p.m. to
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